

Massive Attack on CIA Assailed

Walters Sees Effort to
Make Agency Appear
Immoral, Un-American

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Lt. Gen. Vernon A. Walters, Deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency, Wednesday decried what he termed "a massive attack" going on against the CIA, "an effort to make it appear immoral, shady and un-American."

Addressing the national convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars meeting here, Walters declared:

"We cannot resist the advance of communism if we are tied hand and foot and our pockets are turned inside out and contents exposed for every foreigner to look at. We cannot operate with all of our secrets being turned out for public view."

In an apparent reference to recent and ongoing investigations of the intelligence agencies, the general said: "So here we are, rummaging through the garbage pails of history of events of the '50s and '60s."

"I just hope that equal time will be given to the late '70s and early '80s, because that's when your freedom and mine is going to be decided."

"The real issue before the American people today is not the truth or the falsehood of some of these . . . allegations, some of them reaching back a quarter of a century," Walters said.

"The real issue facing the American people today is this: Is the United States as a free and democratic nation going to have eyes to see and ears to hear, or are we going to stumble into the future, blind and deaf, until the day we have to choose between abject humiliation and nuclear blackmail?"

Walters' remarks, which also contained a defense of controversial CIA drug experiments of the 1950s, were warmly received by several thousand delegates to the VFW meeting in the Los Angeles Convention Center.

Afterwards, the general told reporters he has been delivering similar speeches around the country but has received little coverage.

In an angry exchange with two radio reporters, Walters said the news media has been so concerned with filling critical reports when former President Nguyen Van Thieu of South Vietnam shut down one of Saigon's many newspapers that it (the media) had contributed to the present situation in South Vietnam, where none but Communist newspapers are permitted.

The central thrust of Walters' speech was that while the CIA has had "some bad apples" in its 27-year history, for the most part it has done a good job—and an essential job—of helping freedom survive.

"Because of a few overzealous people who may have done some improper things over the long span of 27 years, the honorable men and women who work in intelligence are being subjected to a torrent of muttered innuendo, and they deserve better than this from those whose freedoms they are guarding," the general said.

"We have developed these great skills in the U.S. intelligence community and now we're told that they're a danger to the United States because they may get into the hands of some dictator," he said.

"Well, I trust the American people and I don't think they're going to have any dictators . . . I just don't think the American people are ready to accept any dictator or puppet Congress or anything that is contrary to the Constitution of our country."

Regarding allegations that the CIA plotted assassinations of foreign leaders, Walters said he did not believe it was in the national interest "for us in the CIA to point the finger at anybody inside, outside, above or alongside the agency."

"The (congressional) committees are looking into that matter," he declared. "Let them make their report. That will be their responsibility."

As for the drug experiments, the general said, "You hear all this outrage . . . Well, I think President Ford spoke for all of us when he described this tragic situation when this man died, committed suicide, after being experimented on with these drugs."

"But I think in all fairness we should go back to the atmosphere of

that time, the early '50s . . . We saw American soldiers (then) for the first time in American history who had been made prisoner who not only were refusing to come home, but denouncing their own country."

"We saw Cardinal Mindszenty and other brave people in Eastern Europe, who persisted against torture when they were prisoners of the Nazis, suddenly caving in and appearing before us glassy eyed or hollow eyed to confess anything their Communist captors wanted them to confess."

"By and large, the American people believed this was being done with mind-controlling drugs," Walters continued. "We feared these could be used on our diplomats or on our armed forces and an effort was made to find how these things worked and how we could counter them."

"And it wasn't just the CIA or the armed forces that were engaging in this. A large number of institutions of learning in the United States used their experiments, did not see anything morally wrong with this."

Walters said that one problem he sees with all the postmortems now "is that you try to judge something by the standards of 25 years later and the perceptions of it . . ."

"Now, we're being pilloried, not just the CIA, but all of us in intelligence, because of our so-called sins of commission," he said. "What I'm concerned about is in the 1990s or some later investigation, our successors will be asked, 'You mean you failed to do this?,' 'You mean you didn't do that?,' 'You mean you weren't watching for this?'"